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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS
DEPT FOR WHA/CEN AND WHA/CCA - JARAHN HILLSMAN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [PREL](#) [CU](#) [ETTC](#) [CS](#)
SUBJECT: COSTA RICA: REVIEW FOR SUSPENSION FOR TITLE III OF THE
LIBERTAD ACT

REF: 09 STATE 115416; 09 SAN JOSE 225; 09 SAN JOSE 448

1. (SBU) Costa Rica's March 18 re-establishment of full diplomatic relations with Cuba (Ref B) has progressed slowly. Costa Rica has named JosC) MarC-a Penabad LC3pez as the new ambassador to Cuba and has converted its consulate into an embassy. The Castro government, however, has not yet named an ambassador or officially established its embassy in San Jose. The upgraded relationship may temper Costa Rica's public criticism of Cuba, but any bilateral thaw will be slow: the two countries and systems of government are simply too different to move quickly. Suspending Title III of the Libertad Act in regard to Costa Rica thus remains in the U.S. national interest, especially if we wish to encourage the GOCR to use its upgraded ties for Arias' stated intent: to establish a "direct and open dialogue" which could positively influence the Castro regime.

2. (SBU) The following answers are keyed to Ref A questions:

Costa Rica has traditionally been a strong critic of the Cuban government. The recent re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Costa Rica and Cuba has brought with it a lull in outspoken calls for democratic development in Cuba, as the GOCR has yet to use its new relationship to promote the promised "dialogue" on democratic change with Cuba.

-- Costa Rica has not made official statements condemning the Cuban government in the past six months.

-- There have been no high-level diplomatic visits between Costa Rica and Cuba in the last six months. Costa Rica converted its consulate in Miramar, Cuba into an embassy and named JosC) MarC-a Penabad LC3pez as the new Ambassador on September 27, 2009. Penabad is a journalist and veteran diplomat who had previously served as Costa Rican Ambassador to Portugal from 1995-1998, and had been serving as Consul General in Cuba since 2003. Cuba currently maintains a consulate in San JosC) and is expected to establish an embassy in the future.

-- Post is not aware of any major Costa Rican business investments in Cuba. However, a number of Costa Rican businesses import cigars from Cuba and repackage them. In addition, Costa Rican tourists regularly visit Cuba and vice versa.

-- Post is not aware of any bilateral trade agreements between Costa Rica and Cuba.

-- There are a small number of exchange programs between Costa Rica and Cuba. A limited number of Costa Rican students have accepted scholarships to study medicine and film in Cuba, but we are not aware of any formal exchange or scholarship programs between Cuban and Costa Rican universities.

BRENNAN